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ABSTRACT

A learning packet is a unit of study on any given topic which allows the student to work somewhat independently from his/her teacher and from the learning rate of the remainder of the class. Most learning packets contain a self-assessment test to find out exactly where the student is with respect to a particular skill. Good learning packets combine a variety of multi-sensory activities. They should be built around performance objectives. Learning packets allow students to benefit from the strengths of many teachers, and they also help guarantee continuity and organization of the baseline concepts within a school. Learning packets can be utilized best in schools where classroom time is flexible and adaptable to students' immediate needs. Grouping of students is required to introduce concepts and skills in large groups as well as independent study sessions. The preparation of a learning packet includes the following steps: (1) assessment of curriculum needs, (2) determination of available resources, (3) definition of expected student outcomes, (4) planning of teacher strategies, (5) organization of packet materials into a logical sequence, (6) refinement of student outcomes, (7) designing methods to ensure student feedback and evaluation, and (8) preparation of a teaching guide. (DC)

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THE ABC's OF LEARNING PACKETS

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

1. There are a number of ways to individualize instruction. Individualization via learning packets is only one approach. The learning packet concept is not new; many teachers have been using the concept for years.

2. There are various ways to develop and design learning packets; the method presented here is a suggestion of one basic approach.

3. Utilization of packets is not a personal method of instruction. Teachers should be available to meet with their students to assist them on the skills presented within a learning packet.

4. Reinforcement of skills and concepts presented in learning packets should be provided by small group instruction.

5. Improvement of instruction can be aided through learning packets if the teacher acquires the necessary teaching skills to motivate and involve students in the learning process.

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PART I

WHAT IS A LEARNING PACKET?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A LEARNING PACKET

Question: What simply is a learning packet?

Answer: Essentially, a learning packet is a unit of study over any given topic which allows the student to work somewhat independently from his teacher and from the learning rate of the remainder of the class.

Question: How long does a student work "somewhat independently" from his teacher and the rest of his class?

Answer: Normally about three to six weeks. Otherwise it becomes more difficult to monitor and evaluate his progress.

Question: Does every student work from the same packet?

Answer: Yes; however, a good packet should differentiate student assignments into several ability levels. Every student should be geared to his proficiency level.

Question: How do you know his proficiency level?

Answer: Most learning packets contain a self-assessment test to find out exactly where the student is with respect to a particular skill. (The same test can be given upon completion of the packet to find out precisely what the student did not learn.)

Question: Are most packets merely questions over reading materials?

Answer: Good learning packets combine a variety of multi-sensory activities. In addition to the classroom text the packet should contain activities such as games, debates, movies, records, filmstrips, graphs, puzzles, political cartoons, charts, research topics, attitude surveys, picture interpretation, maps, songs, application techniques, problem solving strategies, and other such activities.

Question: Is a learning packet just a collection of activities to keep a student busy?

Answer: No. The learning packet must organize all the activities into a logical sequence that will lead to development of a specific concept or skill. Otherwise, the packet will become busy work and the learning process will become of less value.

Question: What kind of questions should be asked in a learning packet?

Answer: Questions should attempt to get students to compare, apply, classify, illustrate, contrast, observe, synthesize, relate, evaluate, generalize, criticize, organize, define, summarize, and analyze. To be avoided are too many questions which emphasize only recall and comprehension skills.

Question: It sounds as if there are definite objectives with learning packets.

Answer: Absolutely. The best learning packets are also written with performance objectives.

Question: What is a performance objective?

Answer: Performance objectives are specific about how the objectives will be measured. For example,

a. From a list of words, identify . . . . .

b. On a multiple choice question, select . . . . .

c. When shown a diagram, label . . . . .

d. On a quiz, list . . . . .

e. After reading an assignment, classify . . . . .

Question: The learner must perform in some way?

Answer: Yes. Performance objectives are specific about what the learners will be able to do. In addition you can measure their performance. For example, on a multiple choice test, a percentage score can be computed.

Question: It all sounds rather specific. Are all performance objectives worded in such a way?

Answer: Yes. Performance objectives do not use immeasurable or vague words such as: understand, appreciate, or know.

Question: What are some examples of performance objectives?

Answer:

a. Write an essay in which a student will give a minimum of five ways in which propaganda techniques are used in TV advertising.

b. When given a list of five geographical areas of Phoenix, the student will select the least desirable location for industrial development for today.

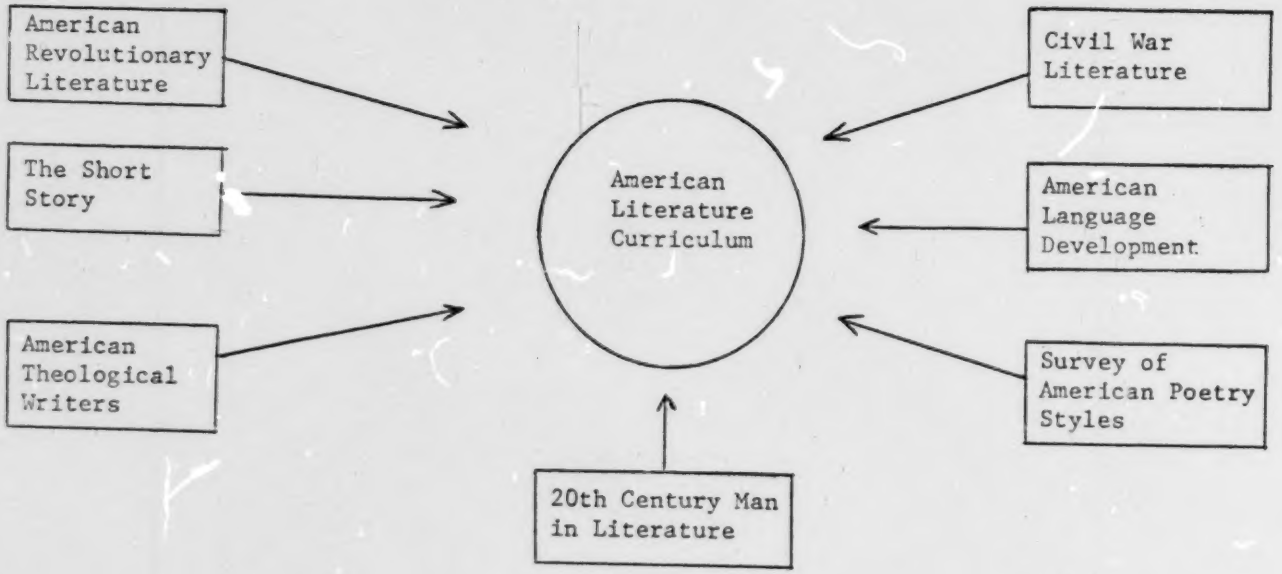
c. When given the process for running for student office at SMHS, the student will arrange the steps into the order in which they would occur.

d. When given a case history of a high school drop-out, the student will determine three significant phases in the development of the drop-out's problem.

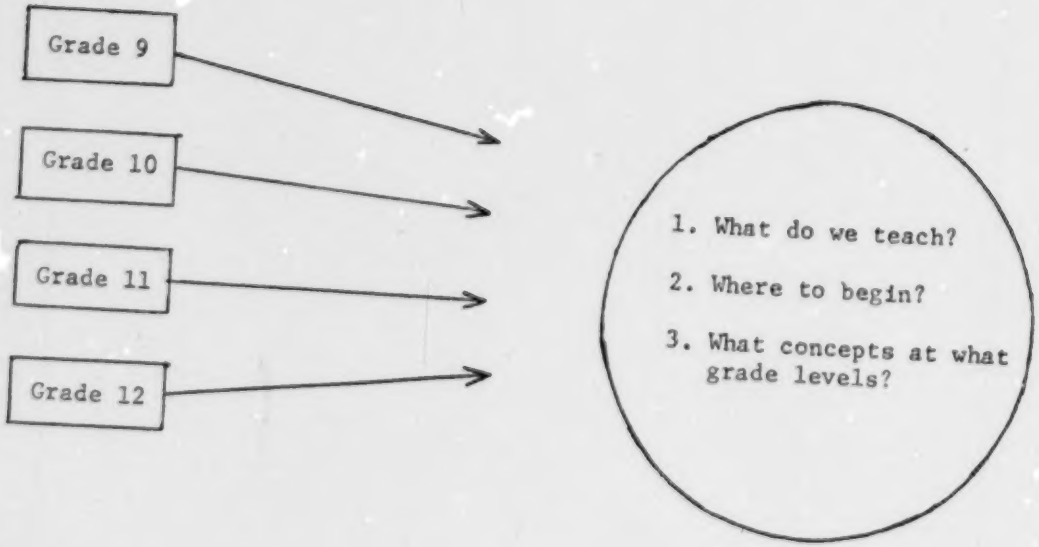
PART II:

WHY USE A LEARNING PACKET?

A. A learning packet allows students to benefit from the strengths of many teachers. Every teacher can contribute to a packet.



B. The learning packet guarantees continuity and organization of the baseline concepts within a school.



PART III:

WHERE AND WHEN TO USE A LEARNING PACKET?

A. What conditions faciliate the use of a learning packet?

1. The learning packet can be best utilized in a school where classroom time is flexible and adaptable to students' immediate needs (time modules). This condition does not rule out utilization of packets for classes which meet for regular time periods.

2. Some unstructured time is necessary to allow the following:

Teachers	Students
a. Time to assist students on an individual basis	a. Time to seek teacher's help
b. Time to develop additional learning packets	b. Time to complete learning packets in the classroom or learning resource centers
c. Time to prepare for small group instruction	c. Time to work with peers on learning packet activities

3. Grouping of students is required to introduce concepts and skills in large groups as well as independent study sessions. These concepts and skills are reinforced in small group classes.

4. Designation of roles is necessary to develop quality packets:

   a. Department chairperson with teaching staff and curriculum specialists:

      Determine scope and sequence of concepts and skills.

      Articulate program between grade levels.

      Coordinates overall effort.

      Handle budget allocations.

b. Teaching staff:

Works on research to make newest materials and techniques available to other teachers.

Assists in writing of objectives and writing of packets, order resource materials, and implements the packet in class.

Evaluates packet effectiveness and recommends changes in content and methodology.

c. Clerical aides:

Type and collate all materials.

Supervise learning resource centers and assists with small group.

PART IV

HOW TO PREPARE A LEARNING PACKET

HOW TO PREPARE A LEARNING PACKET

A. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION BEGINS WITH AN ASSESSMENT OF CURRICULUM NEEDS.

1. What skills or concepts are desirable for students?

2. Which content areas will be of maximum interest to the intended student population?

3. How do "1" and "2" fit with the K-12 curriculum scope and sequence established by the school district?

4. What are the curriculum strengths of the teachers involved?

B. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION CONTINUES WITH A DETERMINATION OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES

1. Will there be a support system to type and collate proposed learning packets?

2. How much support, either student or professional, will be available to illustrate packet material?

3. What reading material is available for the various reading levels of students?

4. What multi-sensory materials are available for student use?

5. Will resource centers or learning laboratories be available for student independent study?

C. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION CONTINUES WITH A DEFINITION OF EXPECTED STUDENT OUTCOMES.

1. What are the major skills or concepts to be taught in the learning packet?

2. How will student behavior be changed?

D. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION CONTINUES WITH PLANNING OF TEACHER STRATEGIES.

1. Have relevant student activities and projects been surveyed?
2. Are there a wide variety of learning activities?
3. Have reading and writing activities been over emphasized?
4. Are open-ended activities included that allow students to create or explore in areas of their own interest?
5. Are materials available that appeal to the learning needs of several levels of students?
6. Do packet questions encourage students to apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate ideas?

E. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION CONTINUES WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF PACKET MATERIALS INTO A LOGICAL SEQUENCE.

1. Are skills and concepts arranged in a developmental sequence?
2. Can the complete learning packet be divided into content or skill sections?
3. Are the instructions understandable?

F. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION CONTINUES WITH REFINEMENT OF EXPECTED STUDENT OUTCOMES.

1. Have specific performance objectives been written for each section of the packet?
2. Are objectives understandable?
3. Are objectives included at the beginning of each section of the packet?

G. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION CONTINUES WITH DESIGNING METHODS TO ENSURE STUDENT FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION.

1. Is there a method of reinforcement for the skills and concepts presented in the packet?
2. Has provision been made for student self-evaluation?
3. Will students have an opportunity to discuss ideas generated by the packet with teachers and other students?
4. Will there be a method for measuring attitude changes?
5. Will students have an opportunity to evaluate the usefulness of the learning packet?

H. LEARNING PACKET PREPARATION IS CONCLUDED WITH THE PREPARATION OF A TEACHING GUIDE.

1. Have you included suggested follow-up activities for small group classes?
2. Does the guide include a bibliography of all available books and multi-sensory media?
3. Does large group instruction coincide with activities in the learning packet?
4. Do teachers need any special training in order to use the learning packet?